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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the nature of learning disabilities and their impact for learning-disabled college students considering attending graduate school or entering the workplace. The information is presented through the personal stories of two learning-disabled young adults, one who was identified as learning disabled in elementary school and the other in college. Their stories appear on the left side of each two-page section, and general information related to their experience follows on the facing right-hand page. The information provided covers the following topics: adjusting to a learning disability; common problems of LD adults in college and beyond; finding and understanding diagnostic evaluations; strategies for success; taking advantage of LD services; roadblocks to success; career planning and pre-work experience; graduate school; choosing the right career; strategies for finding jobs; avoiding and handling problems on the job; compensation and accommodation on the job; disclosure; and understanding one's rights. A resource list of college entrance exams, directories, organizations and support centers, taped texts, and publications concludes the booklet. Stapled to the center of the booklet is a pamphlet by Susan Little titled "An Employer's Guide to Learning Disabilities," which describes learning disabilities and outlines employers' legal duties in interviewing applicants and supervising employees. (JDD)

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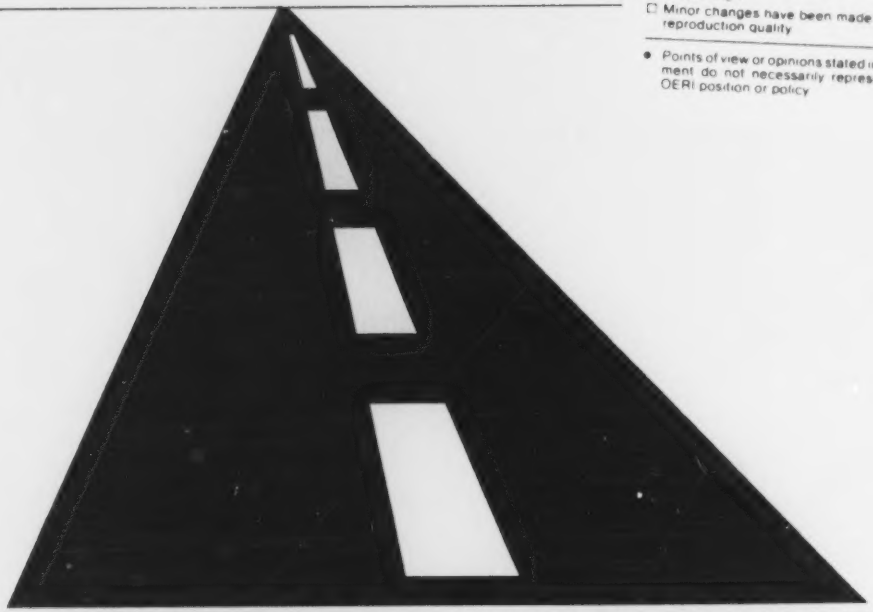

LEARNING DISABILITIES, GRADUATE SCHOOL, AND CAREERS

The Student's Perspective

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Barat College

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LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM
For more information about the Learning Opportunities Program (LOP), a comprehensive support program for learning disabled students at Barat College, write to Dr. Pamela Adelman, Director, Learning Opportunities Program, Barat College, 700 Westleigh Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045.

PROJECT LEARNING STRATEGIES
For more information about Project Learning Strategies (PLuS!), a comprehensive support program for learning disabled students at DePaul University, write to Director, Project Learning Strategies, Schmidt Academic Center, Rm. 220, DePaul University, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614.

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LEARNING DISABILITIES, GRADUATE SCHOOL, AND CAREERS
The Student's Perspective

What happens after college? Is graduate school a realistic possibility for a student with a learning disability? What about getting a job in the real world? Are there things you should be doing right now, while you're still an undergraduate? These questions are addressed in this booklet, a sequel to *College and the High School Student with Learning Disabilities: The Student's Perspective*, and are discussed in terms of the personal stories of two learning disabled young adults, Sandy and Pat. Their stories appear on the left side of each two-page section of this booklet. General information related to their experience follows on the facing page at the right.

Through their own descriptions of their experiences in undergraduate and graduate school and in the workplace, we can see the persistent nature of learning disabilities. The difficulties which LD adults continue to have in processing information can significantly affect performance in college and at work. Although learning disabilities do not go away, the way they manifest themselves may change. Nevertheless, they needn't prevent you from being successful in college or on the job, if you are willing to understand your particular learning disability and to develop compensatory strategies. As you begin to consider career options, it is also important to plan ahead and seek out assistance.

The transition from undergraduate to graduate school, or from college to work, is difficult enough for any student and especially difficult for students with learning disabilities. These transition times often generate feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. In addition, many teachers and most employers do not understand learning disabilities. They perceive learning disabled individuals as being careless, lazy, or stupid.

In the past, frustrated LD students often dropped out of college or quit their jobs. Fortunately, over the past ten years considerable progress has been made in providing services to learning disabled students at the undergraduate level. For those who are graduating from college, graduate school and the workplace have become the new frontiers. This booklet is specifically directed to LD college students who are about to find themselves on these frontiers, but it should also be of interest to their parents, college professors, LD specialists and Disabled Student Service (DSS) providers, personal and career counselors, and employers. It discusses the nature of learning disabilities as well as the impact of a disability in college and on the job. A special section, which can be pulled out of the booklet and given to employers, includes an explanation of legislation governing the employment of learning disabled individuals.

If you are a college student thinking about graduate school or that first job after graduation, you should do some preliminary planning while you are still in college. Now is the time to gather information as well as to develop compensatory strategies and to improve basic skills. Your learning disability doesn't have to keep you from reaching your goals. We hope this booklet will help you take the next step.

"LD doesn't go away...

SANDY: "Hi. I'm Sandy. Although I have a learning disability, I graduated from college a few years ago, and now I'm in a management training program for a fairly large corporation. I only found out about my learning disability in college. I was never a great student in high school, but I did fairly well. I had lots of energy and covered up my problems. But college was a struggle. It was a shock because the workload was so heavy, and I nearly flunked out. Fortunately, I was told about the college LD program by one of my professors. He said he thought I might have a learning disability because my performance in class was so much better than my tests. That's because of my memory problems. I can see now that I was different even as a kid, and my learning disability has been with me all my life. But in grade school and high school I could hide it because the demands weren't too great. You know, it's difficult when you get all the way through college and even grad school, and still have that inner struggle—it's always there. I felt really great about making it all the way through grad school, but now that I'm working, the struggle is still there. I don't think it ever goes away. As it is, you just have to learn to deal with it. You have to be able to say, 'It's OK.'"

PAT: "My name is Pat. When I was in grade school, I had a lot of trouble learning how to read, so ever since I was a kid I've known I had problems. My LD is moving into a new phase now that I'm going to graduate from college. Even though I have pretty significant reading and spelling problems, in college I've learned how to crank out everything. I know what to do and how to do it for each professor. I've gotten in such a nice pattern that I could tell myself, 'I'm not learning disabled. Things are going OK. I'm not hitting any walls.' And now suddenly it's like...boom boom, the problems didn't go away. They're there. I sort of forgot that they were there. But when I go into the workplace, my LD will be carried right along with me. And that little voice inside me that used to say, 'You're a failure with school,' is sort of saying, 'Well, how are you ever going to get through the real world?"

ADJUSTING TO YOUR LEARNING DISABILITY

As the stories of Sandy and Pat illustrate, learning disabilities don't go away—and that is difficult to accept, especially after experiencing success in college. When you're used to a situation, your learning disability may not get in your way very much. For instance, in college you've learned to budget your time so you can complete all your assigned readings. But then in graduate school you'll be faced with a new situation where there are many more readings required. Your disability and the accompanying fear of failure surface once again.

The persistence of a learning disability makes transitional times particularly difficult. You don't know what to expect. Specifically, you don't know how your learning disability will affect your ability to accomplish new tasks. Sometimes the effect is the same—for instance, you have the same spelling problems in graduate school that you had as an undergraduate. At other times, new situations will involve problems you never anticipated, such as unexpected difficulty in accurately filling phone orders. To make transitional times easier, try to:

Understand your strengths and weaknesses. Research on employment outcomes for adults with learning disabilities has found that a major difference between those who were successfully and unsuccessfully employed was self-understanding. A learning disability affects the ability to process ingoing and outgoing information. You need to understand how it affects *your* ability to process information. If you have difficulty processing auditorially, particularly in hearing differences between similar sounds and words, you will probably have difficulty with a job requiring a lot of telephone work. If you're good at expressing yourself orally, you might consider a job in sales. Since your individual strengths and weaknesses change or are affected by new situations, transitions are the times to review previous testing or consider being retested.

Plan ahead. Transitional times are difficult because you don't know what to expect. However, by planning ahead, you can get a better idea of what graduate school or your job will be like.

- Find out which graduate schools have already had learning disabled students enrolled and what types of accommodation have been made. Resource information about graduate schools is listed at the end of the booklet.
- Visit classes taught in the graduate program in which you are interested. If possible, ask to look at course syllabi to find out the assignments and tests as well as the amount of reading and writing required.
- Find out whether internships are available in the type of work in which you are interested or whether volunteering to help an employer would be possible. By doing this, you can find out more about specific job requirements and how your learning disability might affect your ability to complete your responsibilities.

"I am an adult with LD...

SANDY: "I have auditory processing problems which particularly affect my attention span—it's very short. I have a very high level of energy, but that also means lots of anxiety. I get tense; there is a lot of stress. I also have some insomnia. I'm very active; I can't sit still. And also I have memory problems. I can't rely on my memory for deadlines or things I have to do. My memory also affects working with numbers. I cannot add or subtract in my head. It is impossible to remember the numbers. I have to sit down and do it longhand or with a calculator. Also, if I have to read something, I have to read it over again to really retain it.

"When I learned about my LD, I didn't want to admit it at first. I thought LD meant some type of retardation, and so the idea was very offensive. And then I realized it's OK. A learning disability is OK to have because you can still learn. I thought there was something wrong with *me*, when really there was just something wrong with the way I learn. But admitting it was the biggest struggle; then the worst was over. It became easy because for the first time I really wanted to learn, whereas before I didn't push myself to do things for myself. But you have to recognize that this is sort of like Alcoholics Anonymous. First thing you have to do is say, 'Hey, I've got a problem. What am I going to do about it?'"

PAT: "I'm dyslexic. I can't 'hear' the sounds of the letters, or tell them apart. Phonics was always so hard, a disaster. People would say, 'Sound it out,' but I couldn't. So spelling is very difficult for me too. And that of course leads into my writing. I often leave out words or write letters or numbers in the wrong order. I also have difficulty with enunciating words, pronouncing them.

"LD is so contradictory. In school, they were always saying, 'We know you're bright. We know you're intelligent, but your grades aren't showing that. What's happening?' Or they would say, 'You're lazy; you're not trying hard enough.' I guess I always heard that. It was a constant fight with my dad. He'd say, 'Sound it out! Sound it out!' And I kept trying to tell him, 'I don't hear it,' and getting nowhere with all of that. So there was an immense amount of frustration."

COMMON PROBLEMS OF LD ADULTS (IN COLLEGE AND BEYOND)

Sandy's and Pat's stories describe the difficulty that they have had understanding their learning disabilities, which in turn leads to a lot of anxiety and frustration. It's difficult to understand why some things are so hard while others are relatively easy. Since graduate school and the workplace are now the new frontiers for understanding and accommodating learning disabilities, it is especially important for you to be as clear as possible about the nature of learning disabilities in general, as well as about your own specific disability.

Abilities and skills in adults with learning disabilities continue to vary significantly: an individual who is highly verbal with an excellent vocabulary has difficulty spelling elementary level words required to complete a sales report, someone who learns very well auditorially has difficulty reading a computer training manual, and so on. Each LD individual has a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses, but in every case the deficits adversely impact performance. For example, a visual perceptual deficit may interfere directly with reading and indirectly with writing and other skills. Although they have average or even superior intelligence, LD adults experience problems in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, math, oral language, study skills, and social skills. Often, their learning disabilities are inconsistent or sporadic, causing problems one day but not the next. Similarly, they may cause problems in only one specific area or in many areas.

As you know, the causes of learning disabilities are still not clearly understood, but they are presumed to involve neurophysiological dysfunctions. Even so, it is important to note that students who receive appropriate services can minimize many of these deficits and can learn to improve basic skills and to compensate for other problems.

It is also important to recognize what learning disabilities are *not*. They are not forms of mental retardation or emotional disorder, and they are not the result of cultural or ethnic differences. Adults who are educationally underprepared or who come from a different language background may have some of the same surface problems that LD individuals have, especially with spoken or written language. However, these problems are not the result of a processing deficit, and thus such individuals are not learning disabled.

SANDY: "As I said, I only found out about my learning disability in college. I was referred to the university LD program and they did some testing. The evaluation helped, because even though it was two long days of testing, seeing the results made me realize that I really *didn't* know a lot of things I needed to know. Specific things, like I was having trouble with memorizing factual data, retaining things in memory, and things like that. They shared the results with me, and it was a big help to me to actually see it. It kind of made me more motivated to say, 'I think I can learn that.'"

"It's an ongoing challenge...

PAT: "My LD was diagnosed a while ago, but I'm still working on understanding it. You've got to learn to know yourself. That's really important because that's where it all begins, with yourself. Anything I learned about my LD, my strengths and weaknesses, that's paramount. That's really important. For instance, I always felt very dumb. I felt that I didn't try hard enough, and that I...you know, that there must be something wrong with me. Even when I did well on something, I kept thinking, 'Sure, sure. No, I'm lazy. No, I'm lazy.' When I was retested in college, that was the first time I felt that there were some things that I could grab on to. Finally someone said to me, 'Here's what the problems are, and here's what we've got to work with.' That was the first time I felt sort of a sense of hope, felt sort of positive. And I said to myself, 'Well, maybe you aren't dumb.' There's a sense of relief to be able to say to somebody, 'I *can't* sound it out.' It's a relief to say, 'It's not that I'm not trying. I really can't do that, or it's going to take me an extra long time to do that, or it's extremely hard, or I'm still learning how to do that.' It's good to be able to say there's a reason for it. I'm still working on knowing myself better, but at least I finally realized that I'm not just dumb!"

FINDING AND UNDERSTANDING DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATIONS

Since self-understanding is one key to success in your career, you will want to know as much as possible about your strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate diagnostic testing can help you gain insights into how you process information and how you compensate when tasks are difficult. Seek out assistance from your LD specialist or a faculty member with expertise in learning disabilities in order to help you understand previous diagnostic evaluations. There are several reasons why you might want to consider being reevaluated: previous testing may be old and your abilities may have changed, prior testing may not have answered all of your questions, you may want to understand more about yourself, or you may want additional or different kinds of information for making decisions about graduate school and careers.

In any case, it is important to find someone who is qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. Check with your college's Disabled Student Services office. If they do not provide diagnostic services, you can locate qualified individuals by calling or writing for referrals from associations that serve people with learning disabilities. A list of such associations is at the end of this booklet.

In addition to helping you understand your specific learning disability, the purpose of a diagnostic evaluation is to make recommendations that will help you meet educational and career goals. Therefore, it is important to make sure certain types of information will be included in the evaluation by asking the following questions when selecting the diagnostician:

- Will your diagnosis clearly define my strengths and weaknesses?
- Will your report of testing be written in language that I will be able to understand and explain to professors or employers?
- Will your report include ways in which my learning disability may affect me in school or on the job?
- Will your report include specific suggestions and recommendations for remediation and for learning compensatory techniques?
- Can you help me find an LD specialist after the diagnosis who is qualified to provide remediation and help with acquiring compensatory skills?
- Are you willing to have a conference with both the LD specialist and me to discuss the results of testing?
- How much do you charge? Will my medical insurance cover the costs of testing? Do you have a sliding scale?
- Do you have a list of references?

After the testing, as the results are being explained to you, be sure you understand your strengths and weaknesses, and the way your learning disability will affect you in graduate school and on the job. Discuss these issues with your diagnostician. Together you can determine the compensatory strategies and basic skills remediation that are best for you.

"LD affects academics...

SANDY: "The whole time I was in school this cloud came with me, and I never learned how to get rid of it. Some of the classes I've taken I really enjoyed, but yet I never really learned how to enjoy school. There was a lot of apprehension, anxiety, just fear.

"My attention problems made it difficult for me to concentrate in class. It was hard to stay focused, to be aware. I missed a lot of what went on around me, because I was trying to listen and take notes at the same time. When I was studying, it was difficult to pay attention long enough to absorb the material. I could read the same paragraph over and over and over and not even realize I didn't understand. Or sometimes I thought I understood it and then went to class and found out I was totally off base. Also, at home, I often did lots of little things but never got one thing completed; I spent a lot of time just spinning my wheels, whether it was cleaning the house or doing the laundry or doing homework."

PAT: "Because of my dyslexia, I read very slowly. I can't sit down and read a chapter an hour like other students who retain it all and walk away. The way things are said in books is not how I learn. If I hear someone explain things, or if I actually experience something, that is the way I learn best. But I've begun to realize that if I sit in a class and listen, I'll get so much out of it that I don't even worry about taking notes. I'll get more out of it by listening in class and then to the tapes I make.

"My spelling interferes with writing tests and papers. And I leave out words, or transpose words when I write. I've made good progress in learning how to organize my papers, express my ideas, and say things clearly, but the spelling and grammar errors are still there. I do use a computer with a spell check, and it's great, especially for revising. But the spell check only takes me so far. It gives you all these possibilities, and I'm like...I don't know, like, pick one!"

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Here are some strategies for success in college that will also help you when you enter the world of work. Many graduates attribute success on the job to using the same compensatory strategies that they found helpful in college.

Study Habits and Work Methods

- Use a calendar to maintain a timeline for completing requirements and a schedule for study and free time.
- Review all returned assignments and exams to analyze errors.
- Maintain a quiet, organized environment for studying.
- Organize your notebooks for handouts, class notes, and book notes for each course.
- Record lectures with a tape recorder that has a counter. Listening to the entire lecture again is very time- consuming. Set the counter to zero at the beginning of class and jot down the number in the margin of your notes when you have difficulty understanding the material. Review notes immediately after class and add information as needed.
- Gather and organize all materials before starting a study session.
- Break long or difficult tasks into shorter, more manageable steps.

Test-taking

- Develop mnemonic devices for memorizing lists.
- Organize your time and begin studying early so you don't have to cram.
- Answer easier questions first.
- Take advantage of the full time allotted.
- Request reasonable testing modifications when appropriate (e.g., extended time, private room, oral exams).

Reading

- Break reading assignments down into manageable sections. Plan for unhurried study time so you can read, re-read, and react to the text.
- Use recorded textbooks.
- Maintain a list of difficult terms in a personal glossary.
- Develop a system for taking notes when reading.
- Try to read assignments both before and after the lectures.
- Use helpful textbook features (introductory paragraphs, summaries, questions, charts, graphs).

Written Language

- Be sure you understand the writing assignment. Do not guess or assume what is required.
- Choose a topic you will enjoy writing about.
- Focus carefully; beware of a subject that is too broad or too narrow.
- Consider talking your ideas into a tape recorder before you start to write.

SANDY: "I can't tell you what a struggle it was at school not to get discouraged when I saw someone else just breezing through when I had worked so hard. Even as a kid I always thought the other children were smarter than I was. I always felt...when it came to school, I always felt inadequate.

"LD affects self-esteem...

"I would say that anybody with LD who is thinking of going to graduate school, or into a profession, really would be helped by counseling. Otherwise you won't have the strength to get through. When I look back, I think I must have been a teacher's worst nightmare. I was hyperactive, and I would always raise my hand and then not remember the answer. Your self-esteem really suffers. It would be easy to quit, just not make it. My counseling sessions helped me deal with those feelings and gave me the confidence I needed. And also it helps you deal with the stress. If you have to live with the stress and frustration on a daily basis, it's your family that suffers. They have to live with you, and you can't take it out on them."

PAT: "I think every time I sit down to study I say to myself, 'OK, forget the past; you have to start clean today.' You know, I've maintained straight B's and A's in college, but I don't feel successful. I must say that I feel like a failure at school. I've really tried to adjust my thinking there. But there's this little voice from the past that says, 'You can do more. Try harder.' You know, all those years in school really take their toll. I don't give up. If there's anything I don't do it's give up, but your self-esteem really takes a beating.

"I had counseling for a while just to cope with things that went on a long time ago that I never really dealt with. After I was tested in college, I think I went through a whole phase of being angry. Angry at hearing from teachers for years, 'You're not trying; you're lazy.' I started to remember all the stuff that had happened for twelve years, and there was just a lot of anger and resentment. And you always want to find someone to blame, but there is no one to blame. You just have to deal with it. In counseling, you can work through all that, and it helped me immensely."

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS (Continued)

- Consider carefully these four elements of writing:
  Organization. Have an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement. Include three, four, or more paragraphs of support for the thesis. End with a brief concluding statement.
  Development. Be sure to fulfill what you promised in the introduction. Use transitional words as you move from one point to the next.
  Style. Use appropriate language and different kinds of sentences.
  Mechanics. Use commas and apostrophes correctly. Capitalize proper nouns and first words in sentences. Use semicolons but be sure of their usage. Be sure subjects and verbs agree. Write full sentences, not fragments.
- Use a multiple-step proofreading process, reading through once for end punctuation, then once for capitalization, then once for spelling, etc.
- Read your work aloud.
- Exchange assignments with a friend and proofread each other's writing.
- Develop a checklist to monitor punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.
- Maintain a personal list of difficult words for correct spelling.
- Use auxiliary aids such as a word processor or the Franklin Speller.
- Let the work "cool off" for as long as possible; then go back and review.

Mathematics

- Develop a basic checklist to help you inspect math work for computational and process errors.
- Use a color-coding system to make yourself aware of mathematical signs in written calculations, and monitor all work carefully for errors in operations.
- Use a calculator for maximum speed and accuracy.
- For difficult word problems, look for vocabulary clues to identify the correct operations.
- Estimate the answer before working out the exact solution.
- If you have trouble with minus signs or other algebraic symbols, circle them in red so that you pay closer attention to them.

Counseling

Because of your learning disability, you may come to college or enter the job market with more concerns than other people have. Coping with problems takes tremendous energy, and that effort often interferes with reaching your goal. There is no reason to feel that you have to struggle alone with your problems. Personal counseling is well worth the investment in time. It can help you to overcome feelings of being frustrated, stuck, or helpless, as well as to recognize strengths and identify opportunities.

- Seek out counseling through your college's counseling services.
- Attend workshops on such topics as test anxiety and handling stress.
- Participate in support groups with other students with learning disabilities.
- If appropriate, consider family counseling.

"Getting help can make the difference...

SANDY: "I first found out about the university LD program when I was referred for testing. They helped me learn ways to compensate for my attention problems, to work on my skills, and to bring my writing level up. The program was a lot of mental support as well as helping you work through your learning disability. Everybody needs that kind of support to keep going. It also helped to teach me to know myself. You've got to learn to know yourself, so when you get out in the world, in the job market, you can deal with your problems realistically.

"In the program, the one-on-one sessions were the most helpful. I needed that individual attention. I needed to work on those skills with just one person. She made me feel comfortable, because she understood my struggle. If I hadn't felt comfortable, I wouldn't have been able to do it. Joining the program made me grow up a lot. I grew from within and educationally as well."

PAT: "I've learned to use accommodations to work around my problems. I bring a tape recorder to all my classes. I listen better than I read, and I retain better when I just listen, so getting books on tape really helped me to get through my classes and do well.

"I also talk to my professors directly about my LD. Sometimes professors are suspicious because students play games, like not coming to class and so on. So if you go on up there and just tell the professor you've got dyslexia, he looks at you and says, 'That's just another excuse, buddy. Get your homework in on time.' What I would do in order to build up a trusting relationship between the teacher and myself is this: right from the beginning of the semester, I would make sure I had a spotless attendance record and sit in the front row so the teacher knew me. And I participated in class. That builds trust like you can't believe. Sit in the front row and participate, because that shows them that you're eager and you want to be part of the class. And the teachers remember you after that too. A few weeks into the semester, you get up there and you say, 'Hey, I've got this problem. It prevents me from doing such and such, so I need to take my tests untimed.' And if the professor has questions, you bring in the LD support program."

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF LD SERVICES

It is important to take advantages of services and auxiliary aids that can assist you with your learning disability. To do this you should:

Be aware of the different types of services. (1) Most colleges offer such services as tutoring, writing labs, and math centers that are open to all students. (2) Most colleges also offer "access services" (auxiliary aids such as taped books and course modifications such as extended time on tests). These are usually provided by the Disabled Student Services office, which serves all students with special needs. (3) Some colleges provide programs specifically designed for LD students. Some of these LD programs focus on compensatory strategies, such as learning how to use a tape recorder to supplement notetaking. Other, even more comprehensive LD programs not only develop compensatory strategies but also offer remediation or work on basic skills. It is important to understand your own needs so you can seek out the most appropriate services.

Make the most of the services available. Students at a college with only access services need to let the personnel in the DSS office know what arrangements they need. Since you must take complete responsibility for requesting services, you must not only understand your needs but also be able to communicate them. Students who will be working in programs especially designed for LD students need to develop a partnership with their LD specialists. That means discussing your academic progress, problems that may arise, and specific kinds of help you may need. Let your LD specialist know if there is confusion over an assignment, a problem understanding a lecture, or personal problems that interfere with studying. Together you will develop academic strategies and skills, share information, and plan how best to use the time in LD sessions. Your LD specialist can work jointly with you and a career counselor. They can help you consider how your learning disability might affect you on the job and what kinds of accommodations might be reasonable.

Talk to your professors. Be prepared to describe how your learning disability will interfere in a particular class and the types of accommodations you may need. For example, spelling problems may interfere with your ability to take good notes, write reports, and take essay exams. Timing is important. Don't catch your professors a minute before class. Also, talk to them *before* you are having serious problems. Surprise revelations are often interpreted by teachers as excuses.

Never lose sight of the importance of independence. Accommodations and compensatory strategies may be necessary and important, but it is easy to become overly dependent on them. It is important to know when a compensatory strategy is no longer necessary. For example, a student who has been working on reading skills may be able to reduce dependence on taped books. Someone whose writing skills have improved may no longer need extended time on essay tests. Another indication of independence is the ability to be one's own advocate (e.g., contacting your professors to obtain testing accommodations, or ordering your own books on tape).

"Attitudes can get in your way...

SANDY: "In school I had a tendency to get overwhelmed and give up. It was frustrating to sit next to other students who didn't seem to have as much trouble. It was frustrating to see students who didn't even study for exams do well. And I tended to say, 'I can't do this. It's not worth it.' It's hard to keep going and realize you just have to go for it. The LD program really helped me grow in this way. I allow myself more time now, whereas before I wouldn't admit there was a problem. Before, I wouldn't admit that I needed maybe three times as long to read a chapter as other people. So I wouldn't take the time, and my grades suffered. Now I tell myself I need to take the time to accomplish what I want. I plan ahead and make the time I need.

"Also because of my attention problems, I was very disorganized. As I said, I tended to spin my wheels. But for a long time I just wouldn't face what that meant. Because I have a lot of energy, I could tell myself I was being very productive. But most of my energy was wasted; it wasn't focused. Now I've learned that I have to take the time to plan things out and use some of that energy to make a plan and stick to it."

PAT: "When I first came to college, I was convinced I had to do everything unassisted, but I found out that I didn't have the tools to do that. That little voice in my head was still there saying, 'You're lazy. You have to try harder.' I thought if I just worked hard enough, tried hard enough, put in enough hours, I could make it. I ended up driving myself to exhaustion. I still have to work on that—I'm still a workaholic. But now with the LD program's assistance, I have developed ways to make things better for me, like taping my lectures."

ROADBLOCKS TO SUCCESS

When Sandy and Pat looked back upon their first years in college, they realized that certain attitudes and behaviors created mental roadblocks that interfered with success. For instance:

Not facing up to your learning disability. Many LD students are like Pat. Getting special help is difficult, because they want to do it "on their own." However, refusing help keeps you from learning strategies and skills that will make you a more effective learner.

Avoiding hard work. It's just human nature to want to focus on what you do most easily and to avoid working on problem areas. Cutting classes is another way of avoiding hard work. But problems won't disappear, and ignoring them prevents future success. The key is finding a balance between capitalizing on your strengths and working on your problem areas. It's not desirable to work *only* on your disability. But neglecting it can hinder you later on.

Being afraid to take reasonable risks. It's also human nature to take courses that are not so challenging for you. If you are good in art, but have difficulty writing papers, it's much easier to take another art course. Again, the key is finding a balance between the satisfaction of doing well in an easier class and taking a reasonable risk in a more challenging one.

Setting unrealistic goals. Students who set unrealistic expectations create situations that prevent success. Getting involved in too many college activities interferes with important study time for classes. Enrolling in a course that you aren't prepared for can result in frustration and failure. Advisors, Disabled Students' Service providers, and LD support personnel can help you develop and coordinate realistic short-term and long-term goals.

Changing attitudes like these is not easy, but you have to try to do so if you want to be successful. If you recognize any of them in yourself, you can:

Find someone to talk to. A counselor, LD support person, advisor, professor, or relative can help you sort things out. Realize that you don't have to face your problems and concerns alone.

Recognize your strengths, both personal and academic. It's just as important to understand what you do well as it is to understand your learning disability.

Feel comfortable with yourself. Think of yourself as a person who happens to have a learning disability, rather than just as a learning disabled person. Don't let your learning disability color your whole life.

"Think now about your career...

SANDY: "Looking back, I would say students should start thinking about careers the day they walk in the door of the university. Plan ahead. That's really important. You need to think about what you want to do with your life and what you have to do to get to that goal. Goal setting is so important—I can't stress that enough.

"You also have to know how your LD is going to affect you in the workplace. I had an internship my senior year in college, and it helped me learn how to compensate for my memory problems. I was the only person who wrote down everything that had to be done, because I can't depend on my memory. I would constantly be walking around with my calendar to check times and dates and deadlines so that I could meet the goals. My computer was pasted with those post-it notes. Deadlines were stuck all over the front of the computer. I had to push them aside so I could see the screen.

"My short attention span also affects me at work. Even though I really want to pay attention, I'm very easily distracted. I have meetings with other people, and I don't want them to think I'm drifting off, but I do, and then I miss what they say. And I don't want to have to ask what I missed. So that is another struggle. I'm still working on that one."

PAT: "If you can work part time while you're in school, it helps you learn about your LD. I worked in a shoe store part time to put myself through school. I'm very verbal so I started off in sales, but now I'm starting to move more into the office and management of the store. I have real trouble with the tickets, adding a stack of tickets. I can't keep the columns straight, or I leave out numbers.

"I also worked for a while with the senior citizens. And a lot of that was oral—working with them, arranging activities, doing publicity—but some of it was written, too. And that's where I started to have problems. My writing had lots of syntactical problems and spelling errors. So I would do lots of little favors for one of the secretaries, and she would read the releases and announcements and things I had to write. It worked out fine then. But it shows how my learning disability can give me trouble with work."

CAREER PLANNING AND PRE-WORK EXPERIENCE

Gaining career-related experience prior to graduation provides valuable information and will make you more competitive when you begin your job search. It will give you a sense of how your learning disability will show up at work. Several services offered by many college career-planning programs are worth considering:

Individual Career Counseling: Meet with a career counselor to discuss goals for employment after college. This is the time to discuss your interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses. It is important to consider your learning disability right from the beginning stages of the job search. Take along a copy of your diagnostic report or ask your LD specialist to meet with you and the career counselor. With the coordinated assistance of the LD specialist and the career counselor, you can learn how to explain your learning disability to future employers if you decide to disclose it.

Aptitude Testing and Interest Inventories: Sometimes career counselors will encourage you to take aptitude tests or complete interest inventories. By answering questions that address your interests, values, and skills, these tests will then identify careers which appear to be best suited for you. Although these tests may provide a beginning for determining career goals that you never considered before, it's important to keep them in proper perspective. One or two tests cannot predict your future.

Pre-Work Experience: Contact your career counseling center for help with obtaining work experience during the summer or intersession, or part-time work during school sessions. If you can't find paid work that interests you, consider volunteering. Try to find work experience in your area of interest. For example, if you're majoring in education, you may want to work in a day care center. A business major might seek a job in the college's business office. A student majoring in sociology or psychology or interested in the field of counseling could volunteer to be a college admissions representative who meets with prospective students.

Mentor Programs: These programs match students with individuals from the working world who can act as role models as well as provide information and support with respect to career goals. Mentors who have a learning disability are especially effective because they can also help you understand how they overcame problems to achieve career goals.

Job Hunt Clubs: It's never too early to start thinking about finding that first job after college. Job hunt clubs provide group support and structured activities that will help you develop job search techniques and skills for writing resumes and for interviewing.

Job Shadowing: By "shadowing" (observing) someone working in the specific area in which you are interested, you can more fully understand the work requirements, skills needed, and the potential impact of your learning disability. The career counselor or LD support person may be able to help you identify someone whom you could shadow.

"Grad school is a challenge...

SANDY: "In some ways, graduate school was easier than college, but harder in others. My memory was more of a problem when I was an undergrad, less so in graduate school. In undergrad, I had mostly objective tests. I did much better on essay tests than I would do on true-false or multiple choice tests. They're much more up on the level of ideas in grad school and not so much on spitting back information. But it wouldn't be uncommon for a professor to call me into her office and have me read an essay test to her. And it was not uncommon to have a paper turned back and be told that it was inferior work and do it over again. They said that the ideas were good but the writing was horrible. Because I had to do a lot of writing, I must say my writing has gotten better.

"I actually started out in one graduate school and ended up transferring to another. When I applied to the first one, I told them I was LD, and they said that they would make accommodations for me, but they didn't. The professors didn't want to go along with it or explain things in a way that I could learn. Or if they said they would give me extra time, it would just be a small amount. There really wasn't anyone there to be an advocate. I told myself, 'I don't need this,' and I found a school where I felt more comfortable.

"Grad school was a challenge! But you have to believe you can do it. It's wanting to do it that gets you through. Sometimes we don't want to do it because we fear we can't, but really the desire is there. You have to come to terms with what you want, and go for it. You have to tell yourself you can do it, and have a plan for working around your problems. If it means getting extra help, you get extra help."

INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GRADUATE SCHOOL

Some careers require advanced degrees, and these are within the reach of many learning disabled students. As Sandy points outs, graduate school is a challenge but also another goal that can be accomplished. Learning disabled students have earned graduate degrees in such areas as law, medicine, education, business, and computer science. Here is some information to consider when applying to graduate school.

Taking entrance exams under special conditions: Qualifying exams for graduate school (GRE), business school (GMAT), medical school (MCAT), and law school (LSAT) can be taken under special conditions such as extended time. To find out the documentation needed to obtain these accommodations, contact the testing service that administers the test. Addresses and phone numbers of these services are at the end of this booklet.

Finding the right graduate school: Just as the 1980s were a time for rapid growth of undergraduate programs and services for students with learning disabilities, the 1990s will be the time for these services to reach graduate schools. That means you are on the frontier. Like Sandy, you may not want to spend a lot of time struggling to obtain appropriate accommodations. To help yourself find the graduate school that will meet your needs, you should:

- Find out which graduate schools have programs or specific services for students with learning disabilities. You can do this by contacting various organizations and resource centers and by using college guides with information about services for students with learning disabilities.
- Ask the DSS provider about the specific types of accommodations that have been made for graduate students with learning disabilities. Ask to speak to other students with learning disabilities who have attended the graduate school.
- If you know you will need a specific type of accommodation, such as having a tape recorder in class, speak to the professors early on, to make sure that you will not have a problem when requesting this accommodation.
- Try to get a sense of how much extended time will be allotted on exams, so that you can determine whether you will have sufficient time to demonstrate your knowledge.
- Since a major difference between college and graduate school is the amount of reading and writing, find out whether you can take fewer courses per term and extend your time in graduate school.
- Because reading requirements are so much greater in graduate school, you may want to consider using taped books even if you didn't use them as an undergraduate. Try to obtain a list of required readings early so you have ample time to obtain the tapes. The address and phone numbers for Recordings for the Blind are at the end of this booklet.
- If the graduate program you are interested in does not offer any type of support, find out if the university has a graduate program in learning disabilities (typically in the School of Education), where you might find graduate students willing to provide assistance.

"Choosing a career starts with knowing yourself..."

SANDY: "When people with LD are deciding on a career, it's so important to go with your strengths. Otherwise you won't have the drive and energy to keep going. I've learned to go with my strengths. I'm in management because I work well with people. Also, I'm creative and a good problem-solver. And the people I work with have affirmed that.

"You also have to think about what's going on in your heart. You have to ask, 'What do I want to do with the rest of my life?' Picking the right field is the hardest part. Not what's going to make me the most money—well, something's got to keep you alive, of course -- but what's going to make me happy. You've got to enjoy what you're doing. Those are the really big things you have to look at and take into consideration with your learning disability. If you don't like what you're doing, you won't do whatever it takes to overcome that disability, to reach that goal. You just won't do it. You'll do a half-hearted job. You'll get fired."

PAT: "I guess with a learning disability you have to realize what can be fixed and what can't be fixed and have the wisdom to know the difference between the two. I'm still working on the wisdom part. But I'm starting to think that there are some jobs that I should avoid, because they put too much of a strain on my learning disability. I couldn't have a job that involves writing long reports. My writing has gotten better, but it takes me so long. I mean, I do all my writing on the computer, but even so.... You want a report to be perfect, as good as you can make it, and it would be a huge effort. I would avoid them because it isn't something I do easily. I'd avoid working for an agency that wants a lot of paper work for the same reason.

"You really have to take a good look at your strengths, and of course, improve on your weaknesses. It's easy to say, 'Look at your strengths,' but it's hard to do. It seems as if everyone is always focusing on your weaknesses. I know I always kind of go back over my weaknesses and focus on the problems. But it's important to develop your strengths—those are the things that are important on the job."

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAREER FOR YOU

As Sandy and Pat point out, the key to finding the right career for you is *self-understanding*. Being honest with yourself is the first step toward making the right match. You will be most successful in a job that capitalizes on your strengths and gives you a chance to compensate for your weaknesses. For example, a very personable and articulate kindergarten teacher who continues to have difficulty with written language telephones her students' parents rather than writing notes and risking making spelling and syntactical errors. A counselor who has to write reports and letters compensates for written language problems by reading old letters and reports to find helpful phrases and clauses. A sales representative never approaches a customer without his calculator.

You probably have taken several steps already to understand your learning disability. Now you need to consider these deficits with respect to specific job requirements. Some questions to ask yourself are:

- How much reading, writing, spelling, and math is required?
- How much oral language is required, either in person or on the phone?
- How much memory is required?
- Will I need to write lengthy reports or to complete forms?
- Will I need secretarial help?
- Will I need auxiliary aids (e.g., computer, dictaphone, calculator)?
- Will I have a problem with keeping several appointments in one day?

Next, identify your strengths by asking such questions as:

- Do I like to trouble shoot or solve problems?
- Am I energetic? persuasive? creative? outgoing?
- Do I work well with people? with my hands? with computers?
- Am I organized? systematic? logical?

Other questions that will help you identify your values are:

- What types of work have I enjoyed the most in the past?
- Do I mind working evenings and weekends or do I want "a nine-to-five" job?
- How much money do I want to earn?
- Will the job I select allow time for my other interests?
- Do I want to help other people?

Questions that can help you set realistic goals and identify the environment that matches your needs and abilities are:

- What work environment do I like? An office? A store? On the road?
- Do I enjoy working with people or do I prefer working alone?
- Do I mind working for others or would I like to be my own boss?
- Do I need a supportive and flexible atmosphere?
- Do I need to work in a quiet location?
- Do I want the challenge of competition and pressure?

"Searching for the right job...

SANDY: "If you can arrange to work in your field while you're still in school, it's an enormous plus when you look for a job. In my graduate program, I did much of my work in the field under supervision, so I already had a lot of experience, had a lot of contacts. I think the most helpful thing I did when I was looking for a job was to make personal contacts. I think with finding any job it's connections. Your ability helps, but you have to have doors opened for you.

"Of course, it's really important that your resume is properly written. I wrote mine myself, but then I had people look at it and I altered it about four or five times. Interview skills are really important, too. Being able to express yourself verbally is crucial because, let's face it, it's the main medium you're using. Your appearance is important because they're going to form impressions in the first two or three minutes of the interview. So you've got to think of the other guy's senses, what he sees, what he hears in the interview. You stimulate those two senses and the person will give you a chance."

PAT: "Now that I'm about to graduate, I'm working with a vocational rehabilitation agency. I'm talking with a job counselor about my LD. They've not had very many LD adults come through their program although they are funded to assist LD as well as other handicapped people. She got a copy of my file and she was very open and honest. She said, 'I don't understand what this is. How has it affected you in college? How will it affect you on the job?' And this has been crucial because I've learned that I really have to know how to explain my LD in a way people will understand. And my counselor has been very helpful. She's listened and helped me find a way to talk about it that doesn't put people off. They have been very supportive, very sympathetic to what I was going through. They are sending me out on a great many interviews that are exploratory, with the hopes that I will get referred around. And they've taught me how to talk about my learning disability when facing the job market."

STRATEGIES FOR FINDING JOBS

Use vocational rehabilitation agencies. Since the early 1980s, state vocational rehabilitation agencies have been authorized to assist LD clients with education and training leading to employment. The advantage of either public or private (supported by religious or other non-profit organizations) agencies is that they usually have counselors who are somewhat familiar with the idea of learning disabilities. In some cases, they have been specifically trained to assist learning disabled clients. Contact the vocational rehabilitation agency in the geographical area where you are living or going to school.

Make personal contacts. Talk with your parents, relatives, friends, and professors. They are valuable resources for finding jobs.

Develop job search skills. Work with a career counselor at your college or at a vocational rehabilitation agency to develop your job search skills. Career-planning programs offer workshops and individual counseling to assist you with developing your resumes, writing cover letters, and preparing for interviews. Take advantage of these services!

Learn to sell yourself. When applying for jobs, you need to present yourself in a positive manner. You can accomplish this by being prepared to communicate your skills and your willingness to work hard, and by giving a good first impression. Whether you are going to the employer to pick up an application or for an interview, dress appropriately and remember the important social amenities, such as giving a firm handshake, making eye contact, and smiling. If you should decide to disclose your learning disability either in your resume, in the cover letter, or during the interview, explain how you believe you can still accomplish the job responsibilities. Be prepared to explain learning disabilities and the specific accommodations and modifications, if any, that you need on this particular job.

Ask questions. The interview is also the time for you to ask specific questions about the job. Even if you do not disclose your learning disability, there are certain questions you can ask that will help you determine the impact your learning disability will have and whether your compensatory skills will be sufficient.

- If writing is difficult for you, ask about the types of reports that are required and whether you will have to write lengthy reports or just fill out forms. Find out if secretarial help is available or if you will have access to a word processor.
- If your rate of reading is slow, ask how much time is generally given to accomplish specific tasks.
- If you are easily distracted, find out where you will be working.
- If you have difficulty processing information auditorially, ask how much telephone work is involved.
- If math is an area of difficulty, ask how much of the work involves such tasks as calculating bills, preparing invoices, or working with spread sheets or cost analyses.

"LD can interfere on the job...

SANDY: "Between college and grad school, I got a part-time job that I was going to park at until I got my career underway. And I got fired from it after being there only a week and a half. That was sobering. I was working for this wholesale cut-flower distributor, and they put me in a clerking position. With my memory and math problems, making change, doing receipts, and trying to get the drawer to balance were impossible. Do you know how embarrassing it is that you can't balance the drawer? In the middle of the second week, the manager pulled me into his office and told me I was fired. I was so upset, I was bawling the whole way home. I could hardly drive the car through my tears. I could tell it was coming. There was a girl working in the office with me, and I said, 'I know I'm going to be fired.' She said, 'No, you're not. You've got a great personality. You'll get through this fine.' And the next day I was fired. But I had no premonition when I took the job that I would be fired. I thought it was going to be easy. Well, it *was* in the back of my mind, but the back of my mind moved up to the front of my mind real fast!"

PAT: "I'm just learning how important it is to find a job that suits my strengths and weaknesses. I'm very verbal, and what I would really like to do is public relations. I had this PR internship over the holidays. I didn't tell anyone I had LD; I thought this would be a good test for me. But I told my boss that writing was probably my weakest area and that I would need his close supervision. He said I had too many typos, but they were all reversals. And there were problems with leaving out words. I'm getting better at trying to catch those things, but I still make syntactical errors. He thought I was being careless, but I could see that it was my LD shining through. He said that there had been slight improvement in my spelling and sentence structure. And he said so many other areas improved immensely, like my content, direction of the writing, how I put the piece together, and how I gathered the information. But the reversals and syntax never improved. So now I see that if I want to go into PR, I will have to find a job that minimizes the writing, or somehow work it out so that someone edits my work."

AVOIDING AND HANDLING PROBLEMS ON THE JOB

When Sandy and Pat thought about past and present work experience, they realized that there are certain behaviors and attitudes that will cause problems on the job, such as:

Problems with getting along. People who can't get along with employers, supervisors, and co-workers frequently don't succeed in their jobs. Inappropriate communications, refusal to take direction from the boss, overdependence, poor eye contact, and an inability to understand the organization's "culture" are examples of detrimental behaviors and attitudes.

Failure to clarify tasks. If you don't clearly understand your work assignment, the results may be either incorrect or incomplete. In some cases, you may end up spending a lot of time on the wrong tasks. To prevent this from happening, write down directions as often as possible, repeat directions as a way of verifying your understanding of the information, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Taking on too much responsibility. Sometimes employees have problems because they don't know when to say no. They put themselves under a lot of stress and the quality of their work suffers. Although it is important to demonstrate to your employer a willingness to work hard and "go that extra mile," you have to consider what you can realistically handle.

Making mistakes. As Sandy found out when balancing the cash drawer, problems with basic skills persist. That does not mean that you can't take jobs that require these skills, but you have to consider the *emphasis* the job will place on them. For instance, Sandy needed to ask how much math was required and if there were ways to compensate (e.g., a cash register that computes change). Pre-work experience and asking specific questions during your interview will help you determine the effect of your learning disability and whether you can compensate.

Disorganization. Someone who is disorganized tends to lose things and to turn in incomplete and late work. A calendar and personal filing system are extremely important. Develop strategies that include listing and prioritizing goals each day. The key is not just getting organized but staying organized. And that takes extra time, which you should set aside for yourself before or after working hours or on weekends.

If you see yourself experiencing any of these difficulties, you can:

- *Find a mentor.* Try to find someone at work whom you can trust and ask for help in solving your problems. Or you may want to contact a rehabilitation counselor or perhaps your college LD specialist.
- *Disclose your learning disability.* In some cases, problems can be alleviated if you can obtain reasonable accommodations. To do so, it will be necessary to explain your learning disability to your employer.
- *Reassess the match.* If the situation can't be changed, the best decision may be to find another job, a better match.

"Strategies that help...

SANDY: "At work, I compensate with my calendar, my computer, and a calculator. Other people seem so very organized. They get everything done so effortlessly. I have to write myself notes constantly. I have a pad of paper with a To Do list, because if I don't, I forget. This helps me pace myself too, so I don't spin my wheels. I see on my list that I have seven things to do, so I plan ahead how much time I need to spend on each. I usually try get to the office about fifteen minutes early, have a cup of coffee, and plan out my morning. Then I do the same thing after lunch. I don't want to come in real early, because sometimes people you work with tend to resent that.

"Because of my attention problems at meetings, I try not to put myself in a situation (like facing a window) where I know I'll drift off. Sometimes focusing my eyes on a person, being well focused visually, will help me stay in tune. But even then it's something I constantly have to work on. It's a struggle."

PAT: "One way I compensate for my spelling problems is instead of writing memos to people, I try to call them. I do a lot of calling on the phone because it's easier for me. At the shoe store, when I'm adding up a stack of tickets, I always use a calculator. But that doesn't solve the whole problem because I leave numbers out or get them reversed. I've found that if I say every number out loud, I don't make as many mistakes. I switched my lunch hour so I could have the office to myself, and that's when I do the tickets.

"Even though I haven't actually started on a career yet, one thing that worries me is what happens when you get promoted. You have to learn the new job real quick, but for me, it's going to take maybe a little longer. I know there are a lot of things I can do very well, but those writing skills are going to be a little rushed for a while. I've been able to adapt where I work now, but I've been there a long time, and it's a small operation. I'm not sure it will be that way in a larger corporation."

COMPENSATION AND ACCOMMODATION ON THE JOB

Although your learning disability will probably affect your work at times, it does not have to keep you from fulfilling your responsibilities. Learning disabled employees have been successful by using both compensatory strategies and accommodations.

Compensatory strategies are adjustments based on individual learning style that enable you to accomplish a task. You can:

- *Spend additional time.* Work assignments can be completed as long as there is enough time. Some individuals with learning disabilities report that they come in early, stay late, or take work home because they cannot expect their employers to give them overtime or reduce the amount of work.
- *Ask for help.* Approach a supervisor or co-worker for help with understanding directions, clarifying reading material, or proofreading.
- *Monitor work.* Work should be carefully checked over two or three times, particularly when letter and number reversals are a problem.
- *Use auxiliary aids.* Auxiliary aids are very helpful in compensating for spelling and math difficulties. Commonly used aids are the Franklin Speller, computers (for word processing), tape recorders, and calculators.
- *Use organizational strategies.* A calendar is essential for remembering appointments and managing your time. Use the same calendar for business and personal dates to avoid conflicts. It is also important to organize the place where you work, so that papers and other items are not misplaced. If color coding helped you in college, consider developing a color-coded file system at work. And take advantage of modern technology! For example, programmable watches can remind you of appointments. To help you remember to do something at home, call your answering machine and leave yourself a message.
- *Write down directions and take notes.* Some individuals with learning disabilities compensate for memory difficulties by always having paper and pencil. They take notes at meetings and make sure to write down all directions. Consider asking your boss or supervisor if you can tape record meetings.

Accommodations are modifications to the application procedure, work site, work process, or work schedule that enable a disabled person to perform a particular job. State and federal laws require employers to provide accommodation to qualified disabled applicants and employees. To be eligible for an accommodation, you must be otherwise qualified for the job in question and must disclose your learning disability to the employer. On page 32 of this booklet and in the attached brochure, *An Employer's Guide to Learning Disabilities*, you will find more information about reasonable accommodations and the employer's legal responsibilities.

"Should I tell my employer?...

SANDY: "I didn't tell my boss about my learning disability when I was hired. I didn't want to, I guess, because you want to find a job that your employer will think you are qualified for. And so far it's worked out. But if I had it to do over again, I don't know if I would tell my employers I was LD or not. Fifty percent of me says 'Yes,' and fifty percent says 'No.' If I did tell them, then I could relax, and not be afraid someone's going to find out. As it is, I'm always anxious they'll find out I'm not paying attention, or that my writing isn't as good as it should be, and I'll get fired. But on the other hand, I would be afraid that if I did tell them, I would be labeled and underestimated, never given a challenge. It's hard to say which would be the better road."

PAT: "Now that I'm graduating from college and looking for a job, it's scary, you know. What do you tell an employer? I would like to be able to say, 'Look, there are some things that I can't do, but I'm good. I'll get the job done. All I need are a few accommodations like a word processor and, if possible, some secretarial help.'

Sometimes no one knows I am compensating. For instance, at my job in the shoe store a lot of the stock is coded by number, and I get the numbers reversed. So if someone says, 'Get me such and such a shoe,' I tell them to describe it. And now they've sort of learned. Also, there are certain things that I am expected to do, certain bookkeeping tasks, and I've just told them, 'Look, I just can't do this your way. I have another way of doing this. I get it done, but I don't do it the way you say it has to be done because I can't do it that way.' I still get it done—I just do it differently.

"So much depends on the person you're telling this to. There are a lot of people you tell this to and it's like telling them you've got this rare disease that they can catch. Other people are very understanding. They say, 'Tell me more about it. How do you compensate? How did you get through school?' Other people are like, 'Well...ah, that's that.' You have to try to decide whether you're going to risk telling them. You have to try to read other people, size them up as best as you can."

DISCLOSURE — THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM

Whether to disclose your learning disability is a personal decision. To help you make it, here are several pros and cons to consider.

Pros. Once employers understand the positive outcomes of providing accommodations, they should be cooperative because most accommodations are inexpensive and easy to arrange. For some jobs, you may be the most qualified applicant, but you are not even considered because you can't read the employment test quickly or accurately or have too many spelling errors on the application. Unless you disclose your learning disability, you cannot request accommodations, such as taking the test orally or dictating the information for the application.

After you are hired, an accommodation will probably improve both the quality of your work and your efficiency. You are no longer spending valuable time and effort covering up your learning disability, which causes a lot of additional stress and may give employers and co-workers the wrong impression. For example, if you are asking a lot of questions or doing inferior work, you may be perceived as overly dependent, careless, lazy, or stupid. If you are hired for a position that involves initial job training, you may need the same kinds of accommodations as you did in college. Unless you disclose your learning disability, you may jeopardize future job performance because you didn't get as much as you possibly could from the job training sessions.

Disclosing your disability may become easier in the future, because of civil rights laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Also, there is evidence that employers are becoming more willing to provide reasonable accommodations.

Cons. After disclosing your learning disability, you may feel that you are treated differently—that expectations are lowered or your chances for advancement are reduced. These feelings may or may not be accurate. Many people still do not understand learning disabilities and may make hurtful and unwarranted comments. Some employers might consider you less capable.

You may feel that if you disclose your learning disability you will have to spend a lot of time and energy convincing your employer that requested accommodations are reasonable and necessary. Or like Sandy, you might fear that if you disclose your learning disability, your employer may use that as an excuse to fire you. (You should realize that such an action would be a case of unlawful discrimination. More information about this topic can be found on page 32 of this booklet.)

No easy solution. There is no formula, no easy answer to the issue of self-disclosure. But one final piece of advice might help. If you want to remain at your present job, but so much time and effort is directed toward hiding your learning disability that it is affecting the quality of your work or your emotional and physical well-being, then it's time to disclose your learning disability.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS

What is a reasonable accommodation? As stated earlier, accommodations are modifications to the application procedure, work site, work process, or work schedule that would enable a disabled person to perform a particular job. However, employers are not required to provide accommodations that would pose an undue hardship (significant difficulty or expense) upon them. Therefore, you may need to discuss and negotiate accommodations that are satisfactory to both you and your employer.

Reasonable accommodations for the application process include:

- Assistance when filling out applications
- Tape recorded application forms
- Readers for tests
- Exclusion of test content that is not job-related

Reasonable accommodations for the work site, work process, or work schedule include:

- Auxiliary aids
- Restructuring of job responsibilities
- Reassignment to a vacant position
- Readers, proofreaders, and extra clerical support
- Flexible job schedule
- Appropriate work location and environment

Additional information about accommodations can be found in the pull-out brochure.

What is unlawful discrimination? If a person with a learning disability is able to perform essential duties of a job once reasonable accommodations have been made, it is unlawful discrimination to base employment decisions (hiring, firing, promotions, etc.) upon the person's disability. Unlawful discrimination is not something that is easily discernible, so before concluding that it has occurred, ask yourself if there is a basis for believing that you would have been treated differently if you did not have a learning disability. If the answer to this question is yes, first try to change the situation by talking with your supervisor or the personnel department. In some cases, it may be helpful to ask an advocate such as a vocational rehabilitation officer to go with you to help you with solving problems on the job.

However, if the situation cannot be worked out informally, you can contact a state or local agency that investigates charges of discrimination, or seek help from a legal clinic. There are time limits for filing charges. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will be the enforcement agency for employment under the Americans with Disabilities Act. After July, 1992, the law will apply to businesses with 25 or more employees. After July, 1994, it will apply to businesses with 15 or more employees. Once the law goes into effect, you can contact the EEOC, 1400 L Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington D.C. 20005 (1-202-275-7377) to obtain the address and phone number of the district, area, and local office nearest you.

RESOURCES

Graduate and Professional School Entrance Exams:
Information about special testing arrangements is available from the following offices:

Graduate Records Examination (GRE): Educational Testing Service, P.O. Box 6000, Princeton, NJ 08541-6000. (1-609-771-7670)
Medical College Admission Testing (MCAT): ACT Assessment Special Testing for MCAT, ACT Test Administration, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243. (1-319-337-1333)
Law School Admission Test (LSAT): Law Services, Box 2000, New Town, PA 18940. (1-215-968-1100)
Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT): Educational Testing Service, P.O. Box 6103, Princeton, NJ 08541-6103. (1-609-771-7330)

Directories:
College guides are helpful but not comprehensive or fully current. Read them carefully to determine the types and amounts of services provided by each college listed. It is important to determine whether the services are provided by LD specialists.

A Guide to Colleges for Learning Disabled Students (M. A. Liscio, Ed.). New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1986.
Lovejoy's College Guide for the Learning Disabled (C. T. Straughn, Ed.). New York: Monarch Press, 1988.
Petersen's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students (C. T. Mangrum & S. S. Strickhart, Eds.). Princeton, NJ: Peterson's Guides, Inc., 1988.

Organizations and Support Centers:
Information about colleges, college services, and employment for learning disabled students is available from the following organizations and support centers.

Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education (AHSSPPE), P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221. (1-614-488-4972)
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589. (1-708-620-3660)
Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), P.O. Box 40303, Overland Park, KS 66204. (1-913-492-8755)
Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234. (1-412-341-1515)
The Orton Dyslexia Society, 724 York Road, Baltimore, MD 21204. (1-800-ABCD-123 or 1-301-296-0232)
IBM National Support Center for Persons with Disabilities provides information on technology available for persons with disabilities, P.O. Box 2150, Atlanta, GA 30301-9920. (1-800-426-2133)
Higher Education and the Handicapped Resource Center (HEATH), The National Clearing House on Post-Secondary Education for the Handicapped. One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193 (1-202-939-9320 or 1-800-544-3284) Of particular value is the resource paper, *Career Planning and Placement Strategies for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities.*
The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Suite 636, 1111 20th Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036. (1-202-653-5044)

Taped Texts:

Taped books can be obtained from the following agency. If books are not available on tape, you should contact local agencies that have readers who can record the books.

Recordings for the Blind, Inc. (RFB), 20 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540. (1-609-452-0606 or 1-800-221-4792 or 4793)

Publications:

Laurel Brady Maglione. *Transition to Work. Assisting College Students with Learning Disabilities Prepare for Employment.* The Ramapo College Project for Students with Learning Disabilities, Ramapo College of New Jersey, 505 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430.

Carol Wren and Laura Segal. *College Students with Learning Disabilities: The Student's Perspective.* Project Learning Strategies, SAC 220, DePaul University, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614. ($1.00)

Carol Wren, Pamela Adelman, Miriam Benjamin Pike, and John L. Wilson. *College and the High School Student with Learning Disabilities. The Student's Perspective.* Project Learning Strategies, SAC 220, DePaul University, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614. ($2.00)

Pamela B. Adelman and Debbie Olufs. *Assisting College Students with Learning Disabilities. A Tutor's Manual.* Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education. P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221. ($17.00, Member price $9.00)

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